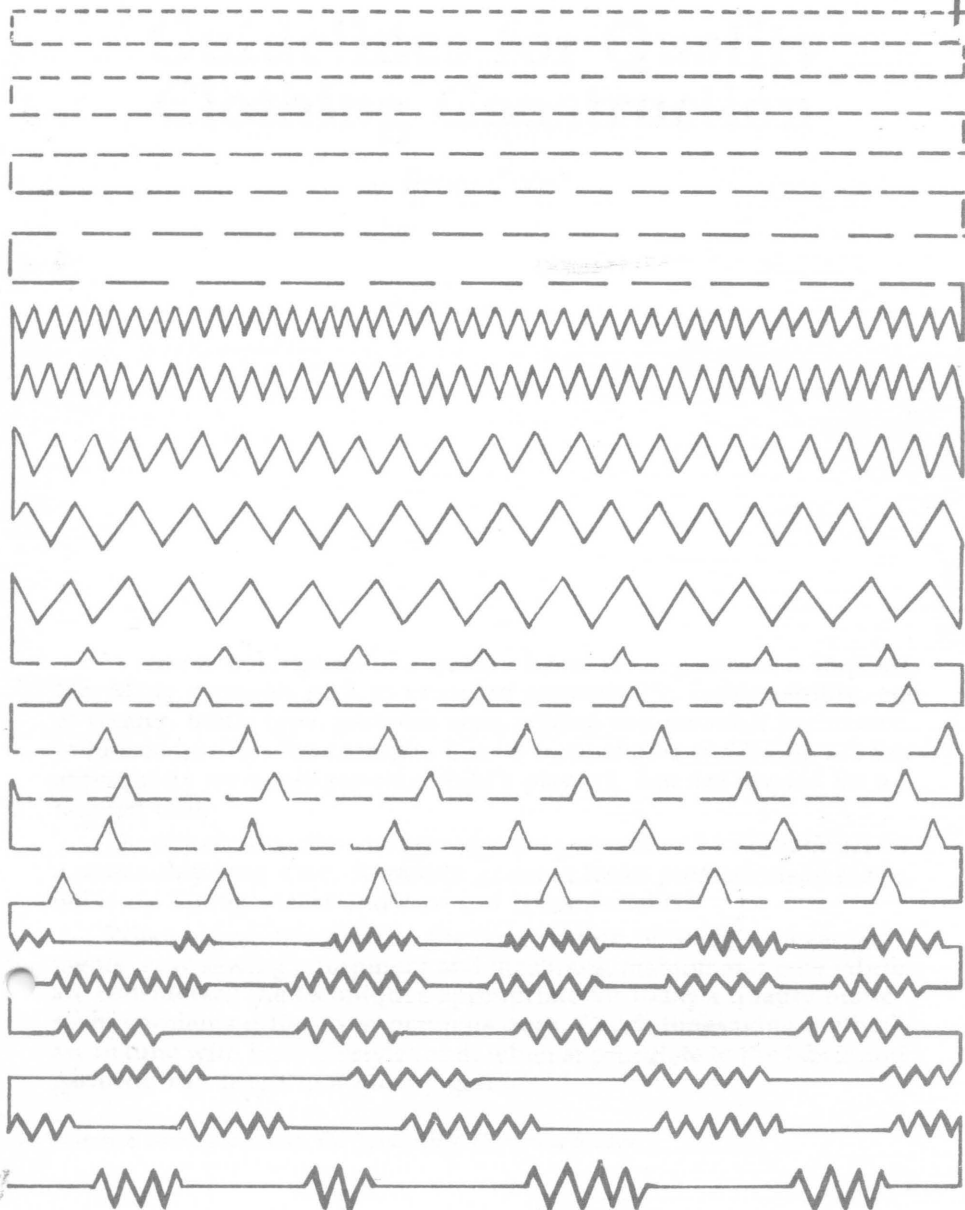


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elines for Quality Clothing Construction



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Guidelines for Quality Clothing Construction

*Becky Culp**

A simple description of a quality home sewn garment is impossible. Many variables such as intended garment life, fashionability, age of wearer, fabric type, garment type, styling and personal preference influence quality. For example, bound buttonholes and lining are not appropriate for a fast-growing child's playsuit, but are needed for a tailored coat.

Quality construction assures that the garment will be functional for a reasonably long time. A quality garment looks professionally made, holds up through wear and care and is comfortable.

When changing trends in the construction of ready-to-wear garments, new sewing equipment and machines, fashion and new fabrics are considered, the techniques appropriate for today's quality home sewn garments differ from previous ones. Quick timesaving methods are in tune with busy lifestyles and, when appropriate to the fabric and garment, can result in a quality garment.

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Quality Overall Appearance

Fabric, trim and construction techniques must work together to create a quality, professional looking garment. The fabric should be compatible weight and drape for the design and enhance finishing details. For example, a solid, smooth fabric emphasizes detailed seaming. Trims also should add to the total appearance.

The garment should look attractive, even and appropriate, *both on and off the body*. Garment fit should be becoming and reflect current fashion trends. Construction techniques should not be obvious nor distract from the total garment.

Quality Tests for Fabric and Trim

Quality fabric and trim will remain attractive and usable with proper care. Price cannot be used as an indicator of quality.

Certain instore tests can be performed before purchasing fabric to determine:

Wrinkle or crease resistance. Crush a corner of the fabric and hold tightly for several seconds. Release. Look for wrinkles. Fabrics that wrinkle easily will require extra care and look unkept when worn.

Stretch recovery. Measure a small amount of fabric against a ruler. Stretch firmly. Release. Compare to original measurement. Test both lengthwise and crosswise recovery to avoid buying fabrics that will sag or bag.

Evenness of dyes. Unroll the approximate amount to be bought from bolt. Examine fabric from sides for evenness of color and design.

Flaws in weave or knit. Unroll approximate amount to be bought from bolt. Hold up to the light and examine. Avoid buying fabrics with holes, light areas or heavy slubs (unless intended as part of the fabric design).

Acceptable woven grainline. Pull thread part way across cut end of fabric. Many slightly off-grain wovens (1" or 2.5 cm per yard) can be straightened; permanently pressed fabric cannot be. Fabrics printed off-grain cannot be straightened. The crosswise thread should follow any printed design that is intended to lie at a right angle to the selvage.

Colorfastness (crocking or rubbing off). Rub fabric against skin or light colored fabric. Look for rubbing off of color.

Temporary sizing or starch. Rub fabric together briskly. Temporary sizing flakes off.

Pilling or balling up. Rub fabric together briskly. Watch for small balls or pills that form on right side of fabric.

Durability of bonding or laminating. Examine cut edge and avoid those which separate easily.

Quality quilting. Examine for durable and strong quilting threads and a durable backing fabric. Quilting threads should not break when pulled on the bias (45° angle).

Odor. Although chemical finishing odors usually are removed by the first laundering, it is wise to avoid fabrics with strong odors.

Quality finishes or processes. Examine labels for quality finishes or processes such as:

- Durable or permanent press for easy care
- Colorfastness (fading)
- Shrinkage control
- Soil release
- Wrinkle or crease resistance
- Flame resistance for safety

Quality trims should be compatible with the fabrics chosen. Look for labels that explain washability or dry cleanability, colorfastness and shrinkage control.

Quality Characteristics

Contemporary and/or traditional techniques can be used to construct a quality garment, but each technique should be compatible with the fabric and design, the skills and time of the homemaker, and the durability and intended wear life of the garment.

The following alphabetical list outlines quality characteristics of specific garment areas. *Characteristics that apply to all techniques include reducing bulk, secure and durable stitching, attractive and suitable details for garment design and fabric type and inconspicuous marking and basting stitches.*

Armholes/Necklines

Smooth and gradual curves or square, sharp lines as designed

Flat, smooth

Lies next to body, does not gap

Facing or lining and understitching not visible on right side

Comfortable, does not bind

Belts

Correct size and length for garment and individual

Flat, smooth

Uniform width and follow grainline unless curved or contoured

Smooth, gradual curve for curved or contoured

Even, uniform shape at end of belt such as square or sharp point, gradual curve, smooth knot

Closure durable, attractive, appropriate, secure and functional. A buckle without prongs may be too loose to stay in place; the addition of a loop may help hold the end of the belt neatly in place (see Figure 1)

Fabric or thread loops evenly spaced, similar in size and large enough to allow belt to thread easily

WHOLE BUCKLE WITH PRONG



BUCKLE WITHOUT PRONG



HALF-BUCKLE WITH
PRONG AND FABRIC LOOP



Figure 1

Buttons

Functional or decorative

Spacing straight and even or in an obvious pattern; positioned at points of stress such as fullest part of bustline; attractive distance from bottom, top and facing of garment edges

Thread or metal shank to allow smooth, flat buttoning

Reinforced with small, flat buttons or interfacing on the underside for added durability on coats, work or play clothes

Covered buttons — smooth edges, securely fastened to backing, no shine or off color from metal showing through fabric

Appropriate size for spacing and garment type (smaller sizes for small garments or close spacing)

Appropriate type for fabric and garment (dressy or sporty, light or heavy weight)

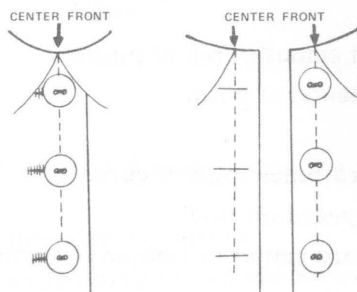


Figure 2

Buttonholes

Flat and attractive

Even length and width

Uniform lips if bound or corded; uniform stitches

Equally spaced and positioned at points of stress such as fullest part of bustline; attractive distance from bottom, top and facing of garment edges

Placed on right-hand front side or left-hand back side of women's garments; placed on left-hand front side of men's

Length allows button to pass through easily but remain buttoned

Inner fabrics do not show through

Buttons fall where intended when buttoned, such as center front or back (see Figure 2)

Casings

Flat, do not twist

Uniform stitching

Even width

Width allows drawstring or elastic to thread easily but not shift too freely during wear

Facing or lining not visible from right side of garment

Collars/Cuffs

Undercollar, undercuff and/or understitching not visible from right side of garment

Edges even and uniform in appearance

Lie smoothly, roll at neckline or stand up as designed

Points or outside edges lie flat, do not turn up

Darts

Tapered and smooth, free of puckers

Securely fastened at point

Flat

Points toward fullest part of curve

Uniformly spaced on body

Pressed toward center or bottom of garment

Facings

Flat, smooth

Unless designed otherwise, facing, interfacing and understitching not visible from garment's right side

Outside edge finished to prevent raveling

Crisp garment edge (as fabric allows)

Inconspicuously attached to garment to hold in place (see Figure 3)

Garment and outside facing edges not stretched

Fit garment edge and inside shape

Fusing

Smooth, unpuckered, no folds

Invisible from right side

Garment edges unstretched

Does not significantly change hand (or texture) and color of fabric

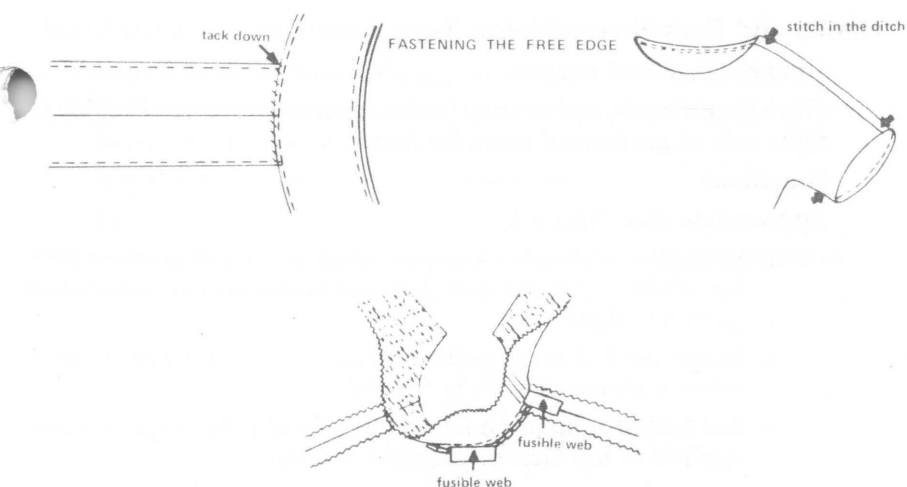


Figure 3

Gathers/Ease

Even and uniform or positioned as designed (no pleats or bunching)

Adequate fullness as intended by design

Control basting stitches removed or not visible to garment's right side

Hems

Even width and equal distance from floor

Stitching and hem allowance edge as inconspicuous from right side as fabric allows (such as sheers), unless topstitched or designed otherwise

Hem allowance flat and smooth, fullness controlled with ease

Hem allowance edge finished to prevent raveling

Bottom edge unstretched

Facing, lining or interfacing not visible on garment's right side

Stitch length appropriate for fabric and garment

Hem allowance width appropriate to fabric and garment type (1" or 2.5 cm for circular, 2-3" or 5.1 to 7.6 cm for straight or slightly flared garments; very narrow for circular to straight design sheer fabrics or very wide for straight design sheers)

Hooks and Eyes/Snaps/Nylon Tape Fasteners

Stitches small and even

Stitches and hook, eye or snap (unless decorative) not noticeable to right side of garment if sewn by hand

Functional

Appropriate (See Figure 4)

- Straight eye with hook or regular snap used at garment overlap while round eye with hook or hanging snap used where garment edges meet
- Snaps used at areas of little strain; hooks and eyes used when a strong closure is needed
- Ball half of snap or hook or loop side of nylon tape fastener applied to top side of garment overlap
- Covered snaps used where may be seen such as jacket or coat, matches garment as closely as possible, edges smooth
- Smaller sizes and lightweights used on lightweight fabrics
- Garment edges held together evenly and smoothly, do not pull or gap

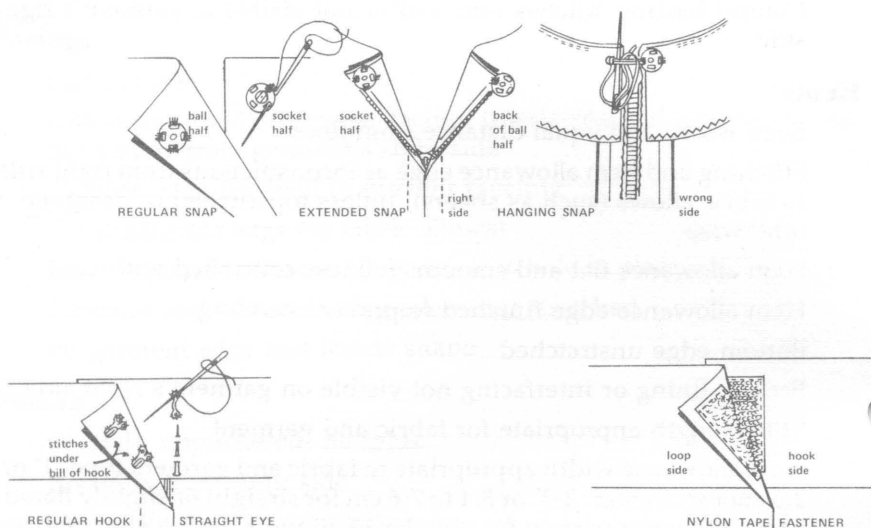


Figure 4

Interfacing

Improves appearance, shape, durability

Enhances and supports outer fabric; does not distract or alter appearance of color or hand (see Figure 5)

Not visible; unpuckered from right side

Flat

Not visible at cut buttonholes or cut edges such as leather or suede-like seaming techniques

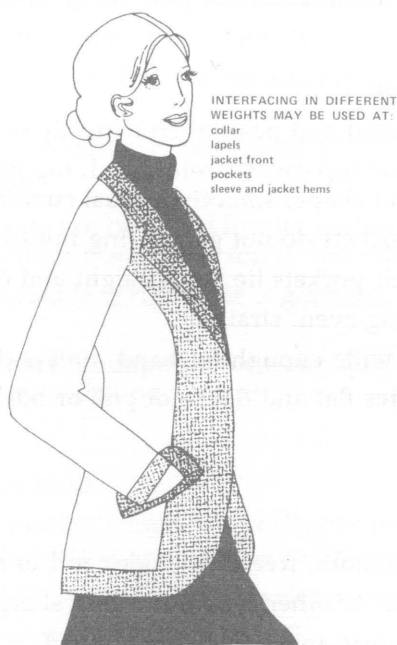


Figure 5

Lining

Improves appearance and durability

Conceals inner construction

Compatible color and weight

Allows dressing ease; does not catch in closures

Corresponding garment and lining seams matched

Comfortable during wear

Does not show from right side (color, wrinkling or rolling outward)

Plackets

Flat

Binding uniform or facing invisible

Functional and attractive

Pleats/Tucks

Uniform width unless designed otherwise

Follow grainline or design of garment

Adequate fullness, do not pull, hang straight

Pockets

Flat, smooth

Evenly spaced and positioned correctly on body

Patch pocket top corners reinforced, top flap and/or hem appropriate size and shape; smooth gradual curves or square even corners

In-seam pockets do not gap; lining invisible

Lips of welt pockets lie flat, straight and do not buckle

Topstitching even, straight

Deep and wide enough for hand, unless decorative

Garment lies flat and does not pull or buckle in pocket area

Pressing

Garment smooth, free of wrinkles and unnecessary creases

Crisp pleats or other areas requiring sharp or flat edges

Original fabric appearance maintained

- no sheen or dulling from iron
- no scorch
- nap or pile fluffy; embossed or embroidered fabrics not matted or flattened
- no stretching of edges or grainlines
- no shrivelling or unwanted shrinking from steam
- no water or mineral spots

Seams, darts and other features flatly pressed along stitching line; no bubbling or unnecessary lapping

No impressions of seam allowances, darts, pins, basting threads and other construction techniques; no overpressing

Seams/Stitches

- Stitches balanced (except for decorative topstitching)
- Stitches even length and appropriate to fabric and technique
- Fabrics free of snags, runs, holes or pulls at seamline
- Thread appropriate type, weight and color
- Seam allowances flat and smooth, trimmed and graded where necessary to reduce bulk
- Seam allowances finished appropriately for fabric and garment, widths may vary from $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1" or .6 to 2.5 cm
- Crossing seams, patterns and plaids match
- Seams free of skipped or broken stitches and knotting or bunching of thread
- Seams smoothly and adequately reinforced at ends
- Loose thread clipped
- Seams hang evenly, do not twist and line up with appropriate body area as designed (center front, side, top of shoulder)
- Understitching not visible to right side of garment; holds facings in place
- Seam reinforced where appropriate for technique and fabric (shoulder, underarm, waistline, crotch)

Sleeves

- Comfortable, do not bind
- Underarm seam allowance trimmed and clipped (set-in sleeves) or reinforced (kimono style) as appropriate to design
- Fullness (ease, gathers or darts) of set-in sleeve evenly distributed
- Hang evenly, do not twist, wrinkle or pull
- Cuff, hem or facing attractive and appropriate

Waistbands

- Follow straight-of-grain, unless contoured or curved
- Reinforced, do not roll
- Appropriate and even width and overlap lines up evenly
- Lap right-hand side over left at front, left-hand side over right at back closings on women's garments. For a side closing, lap on left-hand side so that front laps over back. (Exceptions include boy or masculine-cut pants or jeans.) Men's garments lap left-hand side over right at front closings.
- Follow natural waistline unless lowered or raised design



Adequate overlap for closure

Turned corners smooth square or curved as designed

Garment fullness or ease evenly distributed according to design

Zippers

Topstitching straight, even, appropriate length

Zipper teeth inconspicuous; color blends with garment unless decorative

Lie flat, do not buckle or pucker

Placket, seam or opening flat and smooth; even width

Appropriate length

Appropriate weight zipper tape, teeth and tape for fabric (light-weights used on lightweight fabrics)

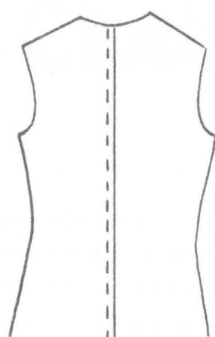
Pull slides easily, does not hang

Seams, plaids or crosswise designs match; top of closure on each side lines up

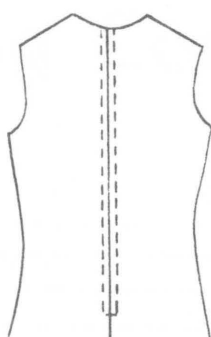
Space allowed for hook and eye or snap at top of zipper if appropriate for design

Appropriate application for garment design and fabric (see Figure 6)

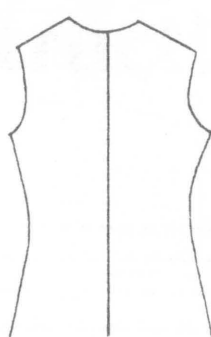
- Centered applications are appropriate for all fabrics; particularly desirable for medium to heavy weight fabrics
- Lapped applications are appropriate for light to medium weight fabrics
- Women's garment should lap right-hand side over left at front, left-hand side over right at back closings. For a side closing, lap on left-hand side so that front laps over back.
- Invisible applications are appropriate for all fabric weights
- Exposed zipper applications in a slash are appropriate for knits
- Zipper applications in a flat-felled seam are appropriate for sportswear where seams are part of the style, usually in a side closure
- Fly front zipper applications are appropriate for most fabrics and garment types, most commonly used on pants
- Hand application is a custom method which is particularly appropriate on pile, delicate or very stretchable fabrics. A custom look can be achieved also by "handpicking" or blindstitching by machine.



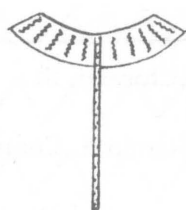
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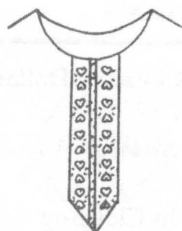
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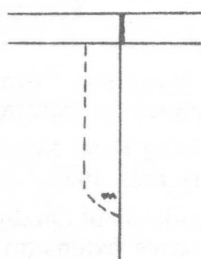
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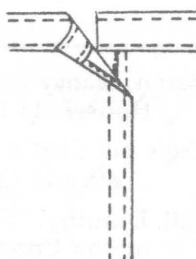
EXPOSED



DECORATIVE



FLY



WELT SEAM

Figure 6

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